



MADISON COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

October 2007

"providing quality, professional customer service to the public and the five primary county service branches"

1. **Law Enforcement**
2. **Fire**
3. **EMS**
4. **Public Works**
5. **Administration and Communications**

Did you know ???

- Madison County Communications Officers average approximately **2752** telephone interactions per month (**688 per week**) or about **33,000** phone interactions each year !
- Madison County Communications Officers average approximately **972** radio interactions per week (**3888 per month**) or approximately **46,656** radio interactions per year !

The Madison County Board of Commissioners approved the development of a new Communications department in Madison County.

The Madison County Communications departments administrative/management duties include: management and supervision of the county E-911 system and the interface with the Public Safety Answering Point, implementation of plans and strategies, supervision of the departments activities, including but not limited to - management and coordination of planning, operations and enhancement of communications activities -

including all communications activities supporting public safety and public service responsibilities in the county.

The communication department is headed by the Communications Coordinator who answers directly to the Board of Commissioners.

A one month cross over / transition period preceded the formal handover of the county department from retiring Independent Consulting CEO Frank Ford - to the new Madison County Communications Department Coordinator Steve DiGiovanna - on October 1st 2007.

Prior to the development of this new department, E-911 and county wireless communications were headed by the Sheriff Office.

The new communications department head will work collaboratively and in close conjunction with the Sheriff's office and the Department of Emergency Service (DES).

The Coordinator and the Sheriff will work closely together to facilitate continued effective communication services and operational functions regarding county E-911 wireless and general county communication activities.

Frank Ford Retires - for now

Frank Ford, the CEO of Independent Consulting and former DES and communications consultant for Madison County, is planning on retiring as of October 1st, 2007. Not one to be idle for long, his immediate plans include a relaxing few months traveling to warmer climates and visiting friends and family with his wife Beverly.

After that, a plan to continue building a new home / mini-ranch in the mountains above Sheridan is high on the "to do" list. Frank has been instrumental in the modernizing of the DES department and the development of the new Communications department. He is also a key player in the implementation and formulation of many new/revised county operational plans and emergency protocols.

His influential work with Interoperability Montana and the establishment of the South Central Interoperability Consortium (SCMIC) have been monumental in helping Montana's rural counties to establish a foothold of influence in the states new and ambitious plans for microwave modernization.



Communications Dept. — what are we up to ???

The Communications Department is charged with many aspects of communications related activities. Some of the immediate items we are currently working on include:

The establishment of a 7 person E-911 committee as recommended by the state Public Safety Service Bureau (PSSB).

Sustain the momentum and the work with South Central Montana Interoperability Consortium (SCMIC) and Interoperability Montana (IM) program.

Implement a new Point to Point (Microwave PTP) enhanced and reliable communication

connection with the VC Hill repeater and the courthouse.

Investigate the purchase options of a new voice recording system in the Sheriff's Office (Stancil vs NICE vs others?).

Develop an updated and modern Policy and Procedure manual specifically designed for the Dispatch / Communications department-relative to operational direction and litigation considerations for the department, the county, the individual Communications officers and their responsibilities.

A monthly newsletter to keep Comm Officers and fellow

county departments and employees informed and aware.

Communications Center business cards so Comm Officers have a professional means to issue Sheriff's / Communications Center information upon requests by walk up customers.

Evaluate the purchase of television news and Weather coverage options in the Primary EOC / dispatch center.

Re-evaluation of county EMS and Fire dispatch response protocols for local fire and EMS agencies.

Initiate 911 recall notification system / training by 11/07.

Is our BUZZ finally gone?

That low buzz / hiss "open mic" problem coming across the local radio frequency this past few months may finally be gone for good - thank you very much!

Apparently, the Upper Ruby Repeater was struck by lightning and damaged sometime in July during one of our frequent summer electrical storms.

This caused a situation where the repeater transmitter locked open and wreaked havoc with our local radio channels and direct radio communication operations.

"We even got complaints from citizens who said they could no longer listen to their scanners because of the constant radio noise" according to one county communications officer.

Essentially, the radio repeater appeared to be in constant transmit mode - according to Jeff Tong of Bridger Communication Services.

After many weeks of hunting the cause of the transmission - including the activation of signal hunting aircraft, the culprit was identified.

"What threw us off was that we de-activated the Upper Ruby Repeater several times electronically - and the signal persisted. This caused us to look at other transmission sources - not realizing the repeater de-activate function was not working as well" according to Jeff Tong. "We wasted a lot of time looking in the wrong direction—and we learned a big lesson" Tong said.

Communications Officers make the difference

I am constantly impressed with the caliber and ability of our Madison County Communications Officers.

Their professionalism and service capacity - while being tasked with the single handed responsibility of all aspects of county communications - are very impressive indeed.

Our Communications center supplies communications and dispatch service for 7 different fire departments, 4 QRU agencies, 2 large ambulance districts, 5 Law Enforcement agencies including: the Madison County Sheriffs Office, the Ennis Police department, local Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks officers, BLM Federal Officers and local Montana Highway Patrol officers.

Additionally, our Comm Officers also interact and monitor

radio communications with road crews, school buses / districts, various county administrative employees, DES and 4 other surrounding counties.

The Communications Center is headed by lifelong county resident and Communications Supervisor Janet Fortner—with 34 years experience in the Sheriff's office dispatch center.

Janet was instrumental in bringing Madison County into "Full Compliance" during our last state audit in 2005. Very few county agencies across the state obtain a "full compliance" rating - and the hard work and attention to detail are a credit to Janet's dedicated service.

Additional full time Communication Officers include Vicki Selvidge with 28 years service, Casey Baril - nearly 20 years of service and Heather Woirhaye

with 9 years of service to the department. These four individuals alone bring a combined total of 91+ years of experience and service to our center.

Part time employees include: Junie Miles with 1 year part time experience, Tommy Lukshaw who is currently completing training and started July 24th of this year. Additionally, Steve DiGiovanna and Detention Officer Carmin Hill fill in as Comm Officers on an "as needed / when possible" basis.

All of our full and part time communication officers have graduated from the Montana State Communication Officer Academy in Helena - and have been certified by the State of Montana as PSAP Communication Officers. This, in addition to the 6 week "in house" training process with Comm Supervisor Janet Fortner.